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INFO RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 3203
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 4045
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 3750
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STATE FOR PM/WRA: DICK STICKLES

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/28/2016
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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON DEMINING IN JORDAN

REF: 05 AMMAN 05726

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Prince Mired bin Ra,ad, Chairman of Jordan,s National Committee on Demining and Rehabilitation (NCDR), updated the Ambassador February 21 on demining efforts since the launching of the Mine Action Plan in June 2005 (reftel). He also discussed Jordan,s strategy for meeting the May 2009 deadline set by the Ottawa Convention for the removal of all landmines. See paragraph 6 for action request. END SUMMARY.

Current Operations =====

12. (C) Jordan's Mine Action Plan, unveiled in June 2005, sets the following goals: clear Jordan of all landmines; increase mine risk education, and survivor and victim assistance; encourage regional and international demining advocacy; and create an NGO to oversee all demining efforts in Jordan. According to Prince Mired, Jordan,s demining effort is currently focused on the Baqura area in the northern section of the Jordan River Valley. The European Union (EU) is funding this mine removal project, which is being implemented by the Jordan Armed Forces, Royal Engineer Corps (REC). Prince Mired stated that the NCDR hopes to use this project as a model for future demining. With EU oversight, the REC -- in conjunction with the NCDR -- is developing written standards for demining and will introduce a total quality management approach. Jordan is further working to improve mine risk education, which Prince Mired acknowledged has been a weak point in the past. The NGO Mine Action Group (MAG) and the United Kingdom are assisting in this endeavor.

Future Plans =====

13. (C) Jordan,s next major demining project will be an impact survey conducted by the American Survey Action Center, a U.S.-based NGO. Funded by the Norwegian and Canadian Governments, Prince Mired stated that the survey will assess the impact of mines on local populations, particularly in areas where there is currently little information on this subject. The survey will in turn drive priorities for future demining efforts.

14. (C) NCDR,s actions are intended to prepare for the opening of Jordan's physical demining efforts to an NGO, the Norwegian People,s Aid (NPA). Prince Mired acknowledged that at the REC's current rate of demining -- 2000 dunams

(494 acres) per year -- Jordan would fall far short of clearing the remaining 39,000 dunams (9,637 acres) of mined land by 2009. The NPA plans to use retired REC soldiers in its workforce, and will focus on the Wadi Araba region south of the Dead Sea to Aqaba. This will be the first effort Jordan has made to clear Israeli mines located on land returned to Jordan by Israel after the 1994 peace treaty. Note: According to Dr. Olaf Juergensen, the UN's chief technical advisor to the NCDR, NPA -- which is primarily funded by the Norwegian government -- will also clear mines located along the Syrian border. End Note.

15. (C) Prince Mired indicated that Jordan is seeking to become the regional center for demining expertise. The GOJ has already bid to host the 2007 Ottawa Convention State Parties Conference, and believes it will succeed in this regard. He emphasized that 2007 will be the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Ottawa Treaty, which should bring Jordan welcome international publicity if it is chosen for the conference venue. Jordan is also hosting a regional demining conference in Aqaba on April 25-26, 2006 in an effort to build support for demining among other Arab countries. In the long term, Prince Mired said Jordan seeks to utilize its experience in demining its own land to develop a regional mine action training center where countries from throughout the Middle East and Africa could send personnel for training. Successfully meeting the Ottawa deadline would go a long way in building international support for this center, Prince Mired added.

Need for Assistance
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16. (C) Post recommends that the Department consider the possibility of providing funds to Jordan's mine risk education program. For a relatively small financial commitment, the U.S. could significantly contribute to alleviating a problem with real human and economic impact. For example, comic books focused on making children aware of the dangers of mines -- which have been used successfully in other countries -- could be translated into Arabic and distributed in Jordan, as well as in other Arab countries with remaining landmines. Post will continue to monitor the NCDR's mine action efforts, and potential areas for international assistance to help build regional mine action capacity, perhaps by establishing a regional mine action training center based in Amman to aid in training deminers from the region and Africa.
HALE